

EHIP Partnership

Family homelessness prevention for educational equity: Building evidence of collective impact and developing practice capacity

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BARI Conference 2023: Greater Boston's Annual Impact Summit

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Who we are

- **Jess McCabe Johnson**, Director of the Housing Hardship Program, Boston College School of Social Work
- **Larry Seamans**, President, FamilyAid
- **Sarah Bartley**, Vice President, Housing & Homelessness, United Way of Massachusetts Bay & Merrimack Valley
- **Indrani Saran**, Assistant Professor of the Practice, Boston College School of Social Work
- **Several others** at UW, FA, BPS, and BC!!!



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Our research-practice partnership

- **Aims**

- **Improve quality of research** on impact of early homelessness prevention on child wellbeing and educational equity.
- **Equip** service providers, schools, administrators, and policy makers **with research evidence**.
- Facilitate **use of research evidence**.
- Ultimately, help **improve child wellbeing and educational equity**.

- **Funders:** W. T. Grant Foundation, Spencer Foundation, Doris Duke Foundation

- **Mechanism:** Institutional Challenge Grant



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Agenda

- Family homelessness and its impacts on education
- The need for coordinated school-housing intervention
- The groundbreaking BPS-FA initiative
- Research needs, challenges, and progress
- Capacity building needs and opportunities



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Incidence and prevalence of family homelessness

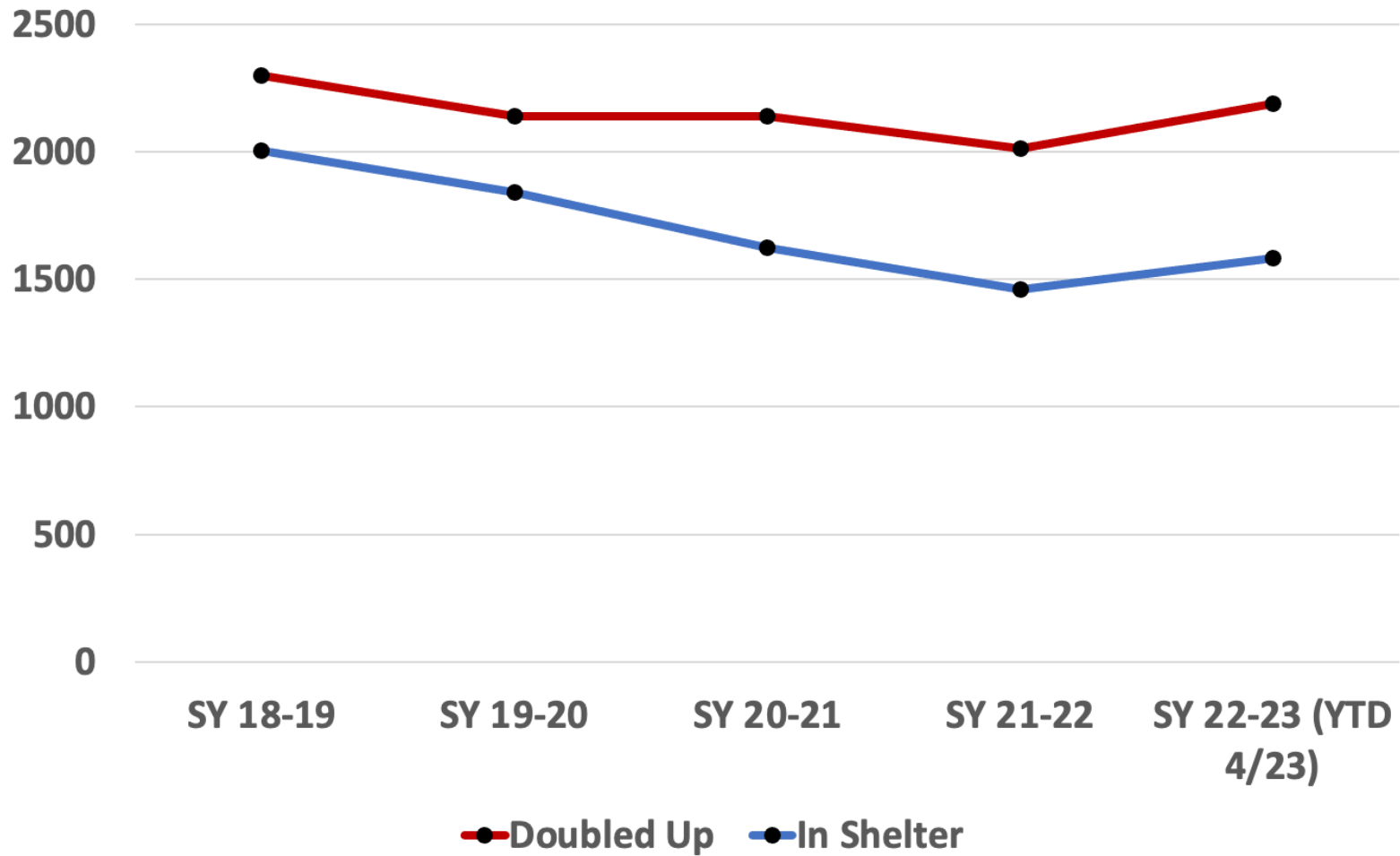
- **Family homelessness:** lacking “fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence” and includes living:
 - in shelter,
 - in public places, and
 - doubled up with others for financial reasons
- 2022, **2,894 families with children** were counted as experiencing literal homelessness on a single night in Boston.



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Number of BPS students identified as experiencing family homelessness



Impacts on educational experiences

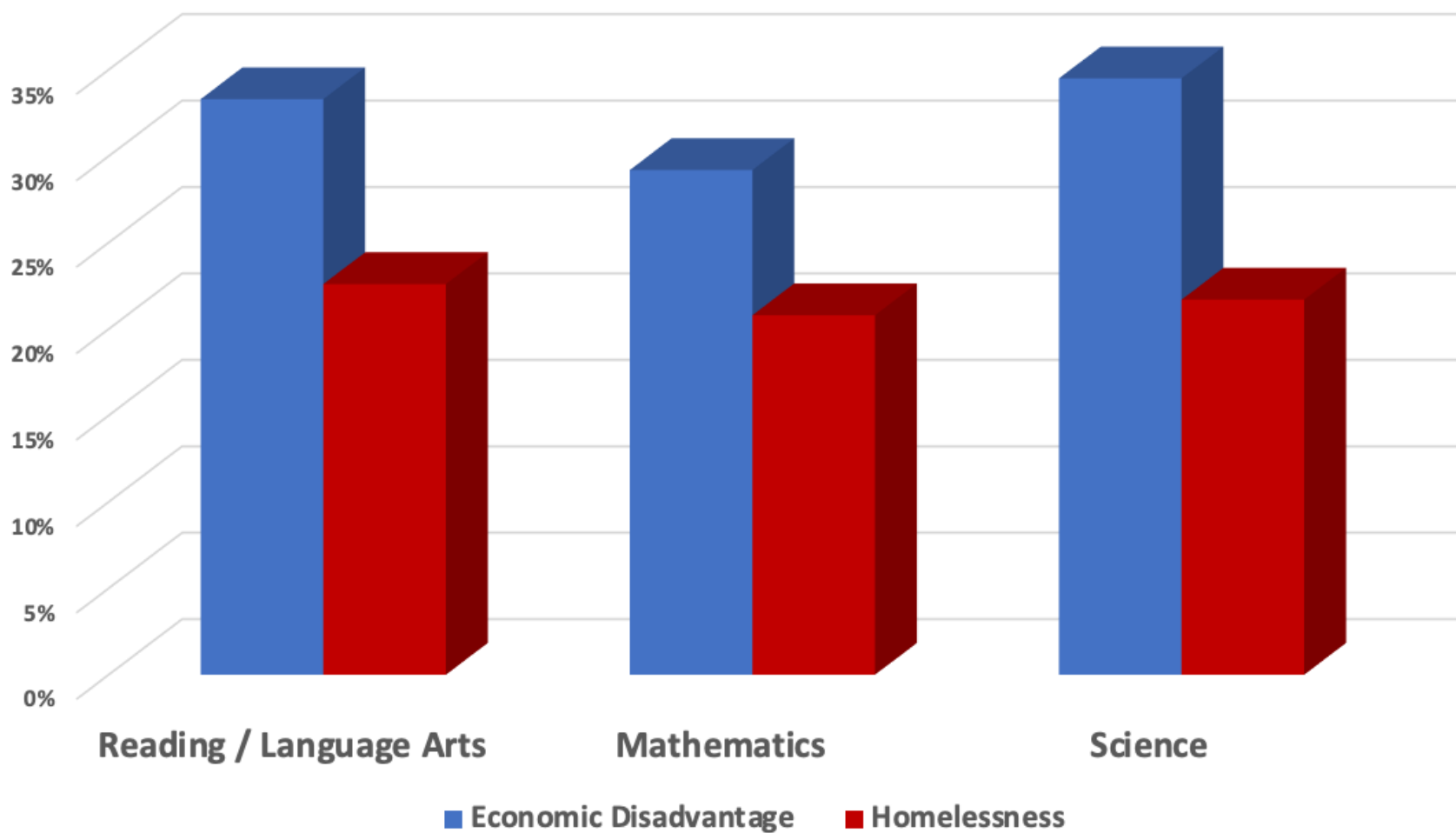
- School mobility
- Attendance
- Enrollment
- Classroom engagement
- Grades
- Test scores
- Likelihood of graduation



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Percentage of students experiencing economic disadvantage and homelessness who received proficient scores on state assessments, SY 2018-19

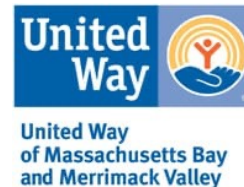


School as a point of intervention

- **McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**
 - Grants students who experience homelessness with rights
 - Requires schools to designate staff to provide support
- **BPS Department of Opportunity Youth**
 - Assistance to maintain school enrollment and transportation
 - Distribution of clothing, toiletries, other basic necessities
 - Referrals to services
- **175** homeless liaisons



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The need for coordinated school-housing intervention

- Schools and housing providers are **aligned** in their pursuit of family wellbeing
- There is a pressing **need for more family homelessness prevention**
- **Collaboration is crucial**: Neither is positioned to comprehensively intervene at intersection of education and housing
- 2019: **BPS and FA partnered** to connect BPS families at-risk of and experiencing homelessness with preventive services



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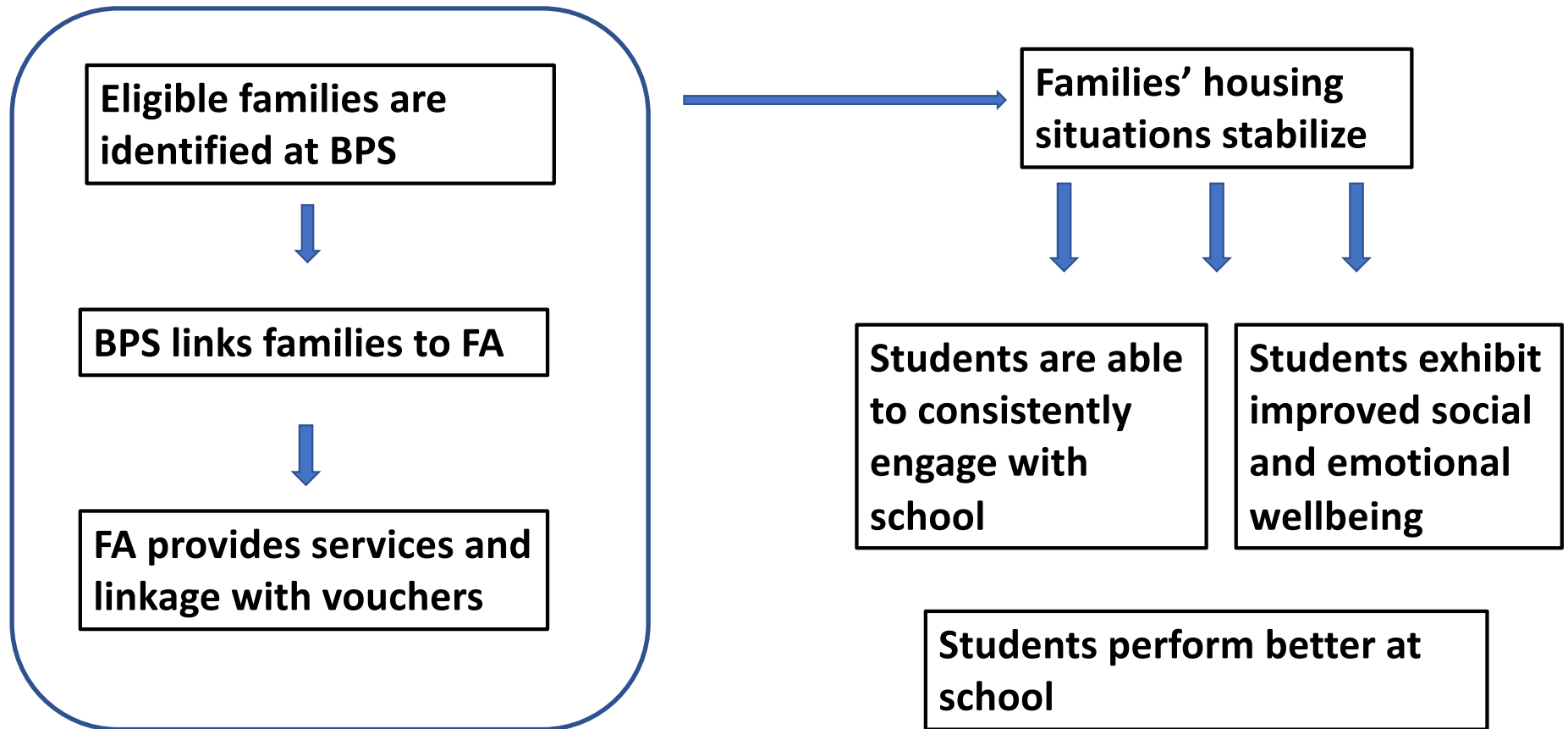
BPS-FA partnership initiative goals

- Stabilize family **housing**
- **Avoid trauma** associated with housing loss and homelessness
- Improve parent and child **socioemotional wellbeing**
- **Promote educational stability** and academic performance



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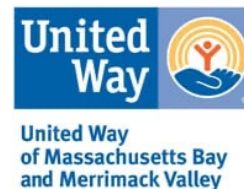


BPS-FA family homelessness prevention theory

“When a family does go from instability to stable, secure housing, in a place where they want to be, the changes in the children’s behavior [are] noticeable almost immediately. It’s just amazing. You know, the kids, they know. They pick up on their parents’ emotional state. When the parents are tranquil, it absolutely rubs off on the kids.”



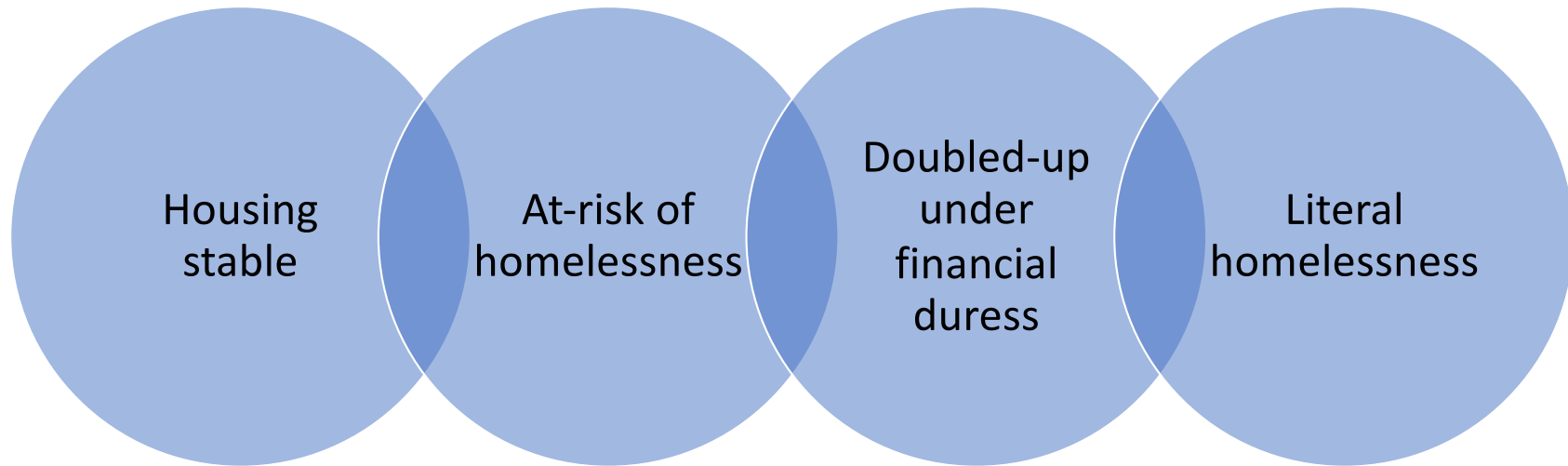
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Upstream



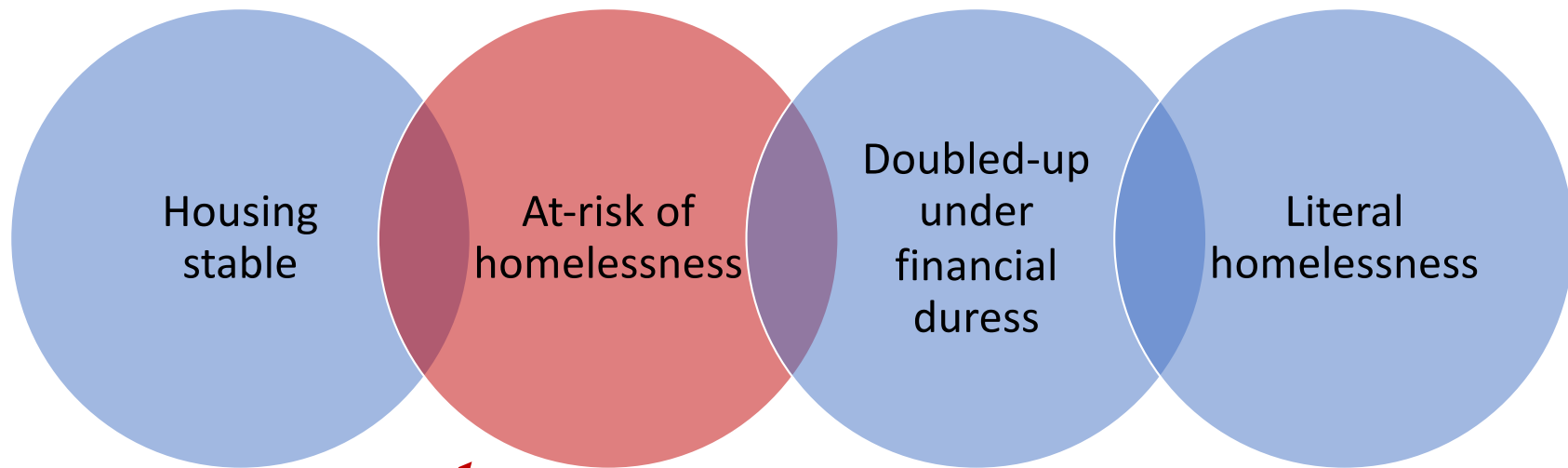
Downstream



Family homelessness

Upstream

Downstream

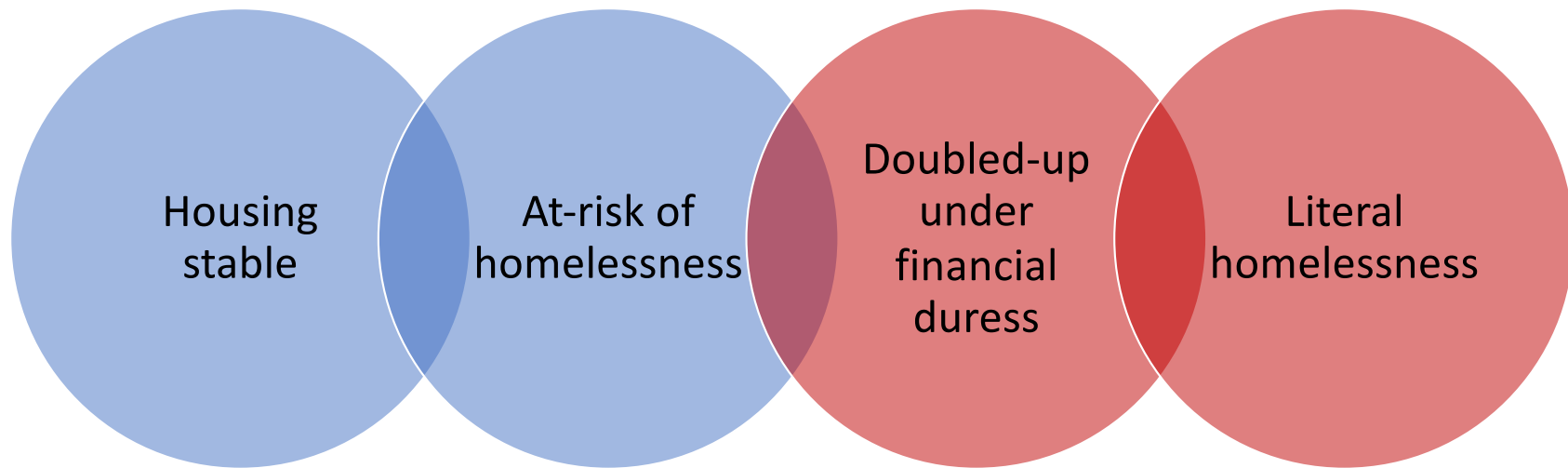


**Early
homelessness
prevention**

Family homelessness

Upstream

Downstream



**Secondary
and tertiary
interventions**

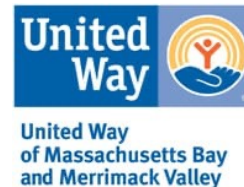
Family homelessness

Original research design

- **Study groups**
 - Intervention recipients
 - Families who must wait for the intervention due to capacity constraints
- **Time frame:** January 2021 – May 2023
- **Data sources**
 - BPS administrative data
 - FA administrative data
 - Survey data



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Research challenges & How we responded

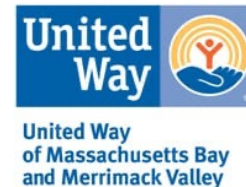
- COVID-related delays and program changes
- No comparison group
- Participant recruitment



- Remained nimble
- New methods
- New voices
- Leaned into partnership



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Current research portfolio

How can homelessness prevention support wellbeing and educational equity?

- **Main study**: Surveys of EHIP recipients (with and without vouchers) and examination of BPS/FA administrative data
- **In-depth client interviews**: Exploration of client experiences
- **Staff insights**: Qualitative exploration of staff experiences and perspectives
- **System modeling**: What are the causal interconnections between housing and education from providers' perspectives?



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Success

- *More than **100** families with over **200** children representing about **100** schools in our main study
- ***2** staff focus groups & **2** staff surveys
- ***9** in-depth qualitative client interviews
- ***1** system modeling initiative with housing providers
- *Over **1300** families served!
- *Over **500** families placed into permanent housing with vouchers!



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He's doing amazing. The day I told him...the day that I showed him our apartment, he just cried and cried. He was so happy. He loves that he has his own space...He loves everything.



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